

Memorial Celebration at Ravensbrück (May 1, 1955)

Abstract

This segment (without sound) shows scenes from a commemoration at the former concentration camp in Ravensbrück on May 1, 1955. The Ravensbrück concentration camp near Fürstenwalde north of Berlin was the largest concentration camp for women within Germany's prewar borders. Around 139,000 women and children and 20,000 men from over forty countries were imprisoned in the camp and tens of thousands of women, children and men died there. While the national Ravensbrück concentration camp memorial wasn't established until 1959, survivors, organized in the survivor organizations such as the *Amicale de Ravensbrück*, and the *Vereinigung der Verfolgten des Naziregimes*, organized and held annual commemoration ceremonies on the site since the early postwar years.

This film clip shows scenes from a ceremony on May 1st, 1955, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the liberation of the camp by the Soviet Army on April 30/May 1st 1945. Survivors from different nations remembered and honored the victims of National Socialist terror. One of the leading advocates for survivors in the postwar decades was Renée Mirande-Laval, a French lawyer and member of the resistance who was imprisoned at the camp. Mirande-Laval, who is visible in the film, chaired the "Amicale de Ravensbrück," and the "Comitee International de Ravensbrück." Another prominent survivor was Rosa Thälmann, Ernst Thälmann's widow, who is also visible in the film clip. In addition to documenting the commemoration by international survivor organizations in the postwar years, the ceremony is an early example of the politization of commemoration ceremonies at concentration camp memorials in the GDR. The film shows, for example, paramilitary formations by members of the SED youth organization *Freie Deutsche Jugend* bearing their flags. Hilde Benjamin, the minister of justice in the GDR from 1953-1967, also visible in the film clip, attended the ceremony as a representative of the state.

Source

Source: Aktuelle Kamera, May 1, 1955, accessed through ARD Mediathek (Retro Spezial DDR), Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv,
<https://www.ardmediathek.de/video/aktuelle-kamera/gedenkfeier-in-ravensbrueck/ard/Y3JpZDovL2hyLW9ubGluZS8xMTY0ODI>

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